

## **COMMUNICATION**

**8612**

(1987)

The manner in which you report information can make or break your reputation as an efficient, dependable lookout. Giving accurate, reliable information in a professional manner and conforming with CDF Cleartext will go a long way toward establishing your credibility. You can establish a poor name for yourself by being careless about the way you talk on the radio. Or, you can become fluent in the accepted patterns of speech by listening to the professionals around you.

Remember, you represent CDF to the listening community, many of whom have scanners in their homes and businesses and are listening to every word you say. Maintain a businesslike manner on the air at all times. Don't become too relaxed or informal. Avoid the use of people's names.

Do your best to give short, clear, and concise messages that contain a maximum of information in a minimum of words. If you have a complicated message, write it down. If your hands and voice are shaking when you are trying to report a smoke, pause for a moment and take a deep breath to calm yourself before getting on the air.

Humor, cuteness, and originality are out of place, as is CB jargon or code.

If you speak professionally, you will be treated as a professional. Credibility is very important, and establishing it takes time and hard work.

## **RADIO REMINDERS**

**8612.1**

(1987)

Do not transmit while someone is on the air; wait until the entire transmission is completed on both sides of the conversation.

If the radio is busy with emergency traffic, relay your routine messages by phone or hold them until later.

When someone calls you on the radio, answer with your station name only. For example "Cahto," rather than "Cahto here," or "This is Cahto."

At the beginning of any transmission, press your mike for a second before you begin to speak, otherwise you may cut off your first few words.

Give your "call sign" at the end of all your radio conversations.

Most of the time you will communicate with the ECC, but you will talk to others in the stations, engines or aircraft. Learn to address them properly, such as Battalion 1117, Utility 1436, Engine 1279, or Copter 101.

Learn to say this:	When you mean this:
Affirmative	Yes
Negative	No
Copy	Okay, I understand
Repeat	I didn't hear you
Stand by	Wait a minute
Advise	Tell...
Unknown	I don't know

Learn terms to describe smoke, such as "building," or "spreading," (slowly, moderately, rapidly) or "dissipating."

Most importantly, think of what you are going to say before speaking!

## **SMOKE REPORTS**

**8612.2**

(1987)

It is very important that the ECC notes lookout first and second reports on the appropriate documents so the lookouts are credited for the service they are providing.

### **FIRST REPORT**

**8612.2.1**

(1987)

When initial information regarding a smoke is reported, it should be concise but contain all necessary information. Once this information has been transmitted to the ECC, let the ECC officer take the lead, asking you for additional information as it is needed. You have now provided the alarm which sets the machinery of the fire suppression organization into motion.

In the following examples, "Howard Forest" is the ECC, and "Cahto" is the lookout.

Typical smoke report.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto, Smoke Report"	"Howard Forest"
"I have a small, white smoke at 217 degrees, 12 miles, in the Willits Valley."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 287"	

The ECC would either start an initial attack response or check with other lookouts and start a smoke investigation.

In the middle of the afternoon you see a small smoke puffing up occasionally in an area where a lot of dooryard burning goes on most mornings, but normally ceases at noon. You don't want the responsibility for making that determination. It could be a real wildfire puffing up and down because someone is trying to put it out.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto, Smoke Report"	"Howard Forest"
"For information, I have a white column at 27 degrees, adjacent to Hwy. 101. It was there most of the morning but just started coming up again."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 278"	

The calls "For information" preface to your report will let the ECC know that this is probably nothing to get excited about and can simply be dealt with routinely.

At 10 o'clock in the morning you see a smoke in a spot that you know is uninhabited private ranchland, and you are not aware of any control burns in the area. Even as you are getting your reading, the smoke has nearly doubled in size.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto, Smoke Report"	"Howard Forest"
"I am picking up a medium-sized white smoke at 269 degrees in the Wages Creek drainage. It is building. I'll try to get a better location in a moment."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 278"	

You spot a smoke which apparently has a pretty good wind on it because it is spread out horizontally over quite an area. The base of it is behind a ridge, hidden from you. You take your reading at the end of the smoke that appears to be nearest the base.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto, Smoke Report"	"Howard Forest"
"I have some topsmoke at approximately 52 degrees. This may not be accurate because I can't see the base and the wind is blowing the smoke over."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 278"	

Note: When lookouts report a smoke, it is because they see something. It is the responsibility of responding personnel to make a concentrated effort to determine the cause and location of the smoke, if possible. Locating these smokes helps the lookout to learn their area, relate the material burning to its smoke characteristics, and gain confidence. A thorough search shows the lookout that his concerns are taken as seriously as those of any other member of the fire control team.

## SECOND REPORTS

**8612.2.2**

(1987)

Many times you will have the opportunity to confirm a reported smoke. In this case, you must adapt your information to that which has already been given. A good second report may both confirm a fire that had only been vaguely reported and pin down its location.

A fire station has just received a local report of a fire in the south end of the valley. The reporting party couldn't tell them exactly where it was. The station has relayed this rather vague report to the ECC. You can see the smoke.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto"	"Howard Forest"
"I have that smoke at 97 degrees, 8 miles. It's on the east side of Ten Mile Creek, but still in the flats and it doesn't appear to be building."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 278"	

The ECC has just dispatched engines to a vehicle fire ten miles south of town on Highway 101. You can see the smoke.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto"	"Howard Forest"
"The vehicle fire on Hwy 101 is visible at 146 degrees. It does not appear to have extended to wildland."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 278"	

Another lookout reports a smoke that you know to be a fixed smoke from an industrial facility.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto"	"Howard Forest"
"I think the smoke that Two Rock is picking up is the batch plant at 218 degrees, north of Ft. Bragg. It's putting up a large dark column."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 278"	

Give a little description of the smoke that you can see, just in case the other lookout is looking at a small white smoke that may be hidden from your sight.

The ECC asks you to check for smoke in an area near your lookout which is hidden behind a ridge.

---- CAHTO ----	---- HOWARD FOREST ----
"Howard Forest, Cahto - Nothing is showing at this time but it's behind a ridge and will have to come up pretty high before I'll be able to see it."	"Howard Forest copy"
"KBU 278"	

This tells the ECC officer that just because you can't see this smoke, it doesn't mean that there is nothing there.

After you hear the quick-call tones that mean a fire dispatch is about to be made and you look up and immediately see the smoke, get the reading on it, but resist the impulse to immediately give that information to the ECC. Wait for the radio traffic to clear and then quickly give the information.

When you are giving a cross to another lookout's first report, you don't need to stop and figure out the location or distance. The ECC officer does that while triangulating the two-degree readings.

## **FOLLOWUP REPORTS**

**8612.3**

(1987)

Many times, after the ECC has dispatched the initial attack crews, he/she may ask the lookout for a further report on the smoke.

## **MAJOR CHANGES IN SMOKE**

**8612.3.1**

(1987)

Major changes in a smoke's characteristics should be reported to the ECC immediately, for instance, when the small smoke you initially reported begins to build rapidly in size, or when the smoke disappears completely before units arrive on scene. Use common sense when reporting these changes after units have arrived on the scene.

## **PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE ECC**

**8612.3.2**

(1987)

An important responsibility of lookouts is to provide enough information to the ECC so an evaluation can be made regarding the proper amount of personnel and equipment to send to the fire. Therefore, if visibility permits, lookouts should be prepared to describe systematically the size of the fire, rate of spread, fuel type, topography, structures threatened, etc.

## **OTHER CHANGES IN CONDITIONS**

**8612.3.3**

(1987)

Other changes in conditions that may need to be reported to the ECC include changes in wind or weather conditions such as temperature, precipitation, and the beginning and termination of cumulus cloud buildup or lightning activity. Changes in visibility due to clouds, fog, or extreme haze should also be reported.

## **DRIFT SMOKE**

**8612.3.4**

(1987)

Occasionally a heavy concentration of drift smoke may move through your area from a distant fire. Report this condition to the ECC because they always receive a lot of phone calls from concerned citizens when this happens.

## **ACCESS REPORTS**

**8612.4**

(1987)

Lookouts with in-depth knowledge of the area may be able to substantially assist the ECC in directing first-in crews. Generally the lookout can tell by the radio traffic whether the crews need assistance. If the lookout is sure he/she can help, he/she should call the ECC by phone and relay the information. If the lookout is not absolutely positive of access directions, he/she should not attempt to help since uncertainty will only contribute to confusion.

## **RELAYING RADIO TRAFFIC**

**8612.5**

(1987)

Because of radio coverage characteristics, the lookout may be able to assist others to get a message through. This usually consists of taking the message from one party, writing it down accurately, and delivering it to another via your radio.

## **COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT**

**8612.6**

(1987)

### **CDF RADIO**

**8612.6.1**

(1987)

This is the primary communication device for smoke reports and followup reports.

### **TELEPHONE**

**8612.6.2**

(1987)

This is used as a backup to the radio or for conversations that are not appropriate for radio transmission.

### **SCANNER**

**8612.6.3**

(1987)

This is used as an information source to keep the lookout advised of what is happening around the unit or within other agencies. It may also be used to cross-monitor and communicate with other agencies.

## **CITIZENS BAND (CB) RADIO**

**8612.6.4**

(1987)

With approval of the lookout's supervisor, these frequencies can be used to communicate between lookouts or to monitor for emergency traffic generated by the general public. CB radios can sometimes greatly increase the effectiveness of lookouts because they allow the report of fires when visibility is poor and/or sizes are too small for the lookout to discriminate.

In addition to receiving fire reports, many other types of emergencies to which CDF responds are commonly reported on CB long before people are able to reach a telephone. When providing this service, lookouts need to collect information for their ECCs, such as location, access, emergency conditions, injuries, and reporting party.

## **OTHER AGENCY RADIO EQUIPMENT**

**8612.6.5**

(1987)

In many locations, other agencies which frequently interact with CDF may voluntarily provide a radio to the lookout for emergency communication.

**FORMS AND/OR FORMS SAMPLES: RETURN TO CDF LIBRARY  
HOME PAGE FOR FORMS/FORMS SAMPLES SITE LINK.**

[\(see next section\)](#)

[\(see Table of Contents\)](#)